



SPECIAL DELIVERY



A publication of the Postal A's Model A Ford Mail Truck Club

Christmas 2025

Volume XXX Issue 5

As we approach both Hanukkah and the Christmas Seasons, the officers of the Postal A's wish each of you a Joyous Holiday.

I remind you to be thankful to live in the greatest nation the world has ever seen and pray that our nation may once again be united in all that we do.



MAFCA SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

MARC SPECIAL REGION



Visit our website at www.postalas.com or www.postalas.org

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The Postal A's

The Postal A's is a Special Interest Body Style Chapter of the Model A Ford Club of America (MAFCA) and a Special Region of the Model A Restorers Club (MARC), whose purpose is to aid its members in the authentic restoration, use and enjoyment of a limited production of commercial bodies built for the U.S. Post Office Department and mounted on Ford Model A & AA chassis.

The Special Delivery

To assist in achievement of this purpose, The Special Delivery newsletter is published by the Postal A's. It is written, edited, and published on a volunteer basis by the newsletter staff. All signed materials are the responsibility of the author and do not necessarily represent the opinion of the newsletter staff or the Postal A's. Any unsigned material, facts, opinions or other information is the sole responsibility of the newsletter staff, is believed to be the most current and accurate information available on the Model A Mail Truck, but does not necessarily represent an official position of the Postal A's, MAFCA or MARC. Authorization to quote or reprint from the Postal A's Special Delivery is granted provided proper credit is given.

Postal A's Website

Additional information is available via the website @ www.postalas.com.

Due to the untimely passing of Bob Kiley, our VP, changes had to be made to the officers of the Postal A's.

Thank you to Roger Davis for stepping into the VP role of the Postal A's and Jim McPherson for adding the secretary role to his current position as Treasurer.

Remember this is not a club for 2 or 3 of us. Let me know where you would like to serve and I am always soliciting articles for "Special Delivery".



A special thanks to Lawrence Komp for the Mail Truck drawings on our letterhead & newsletter

Don't forget our webpages at:

www.postalas.com

or

www.postalas.org

VIRTUAL MAIL CONVENTION

Before I say anything else, I must express my sincere gratitude to Roger Davis for his sole efforts in putting together the on-line zoom virtual meeting we held on Oct. 14. Roger and I had discussed this idea at length and neither of us had any real feeling if it would work or not. Roger and I decided to roll out the idea and then he and I tried the infrastructure out to insure that it would work.

Never in my wildest dreams did I imagine that we would have 19 individuals participating through the Zoom™ platform. We discussed what we would like to see in the future for the Club, including increased visibility for the Postal A's, adding to our membership roll, and of course, helping each other restore these trucks. Probably one of our biggest problems for our younger members and prospective members is our lack of taking electronic payments. Just to let you know, I am looking into that.

Also out of the meeting came the following future events:

Proposed future events are:

1. Another Virtual Convention in April 2026;
2. Side Meeting at the 2026 MAFCA National Convention, 31 May - 7 Jun 2026, Pendleton, OR;
3. Lunch at the original Mifflinburg Body Company Building, now housing the Rusty Rail Brewing Company and Grill in Mifflinburg, PA during the 2026 Hershey Swap Meet, Noon, Thursday, 8 Oct 2026 (about 1 hour north of Hershey, PA).

Let us know your thoughts.

MUSINGS FROM HERSHEY

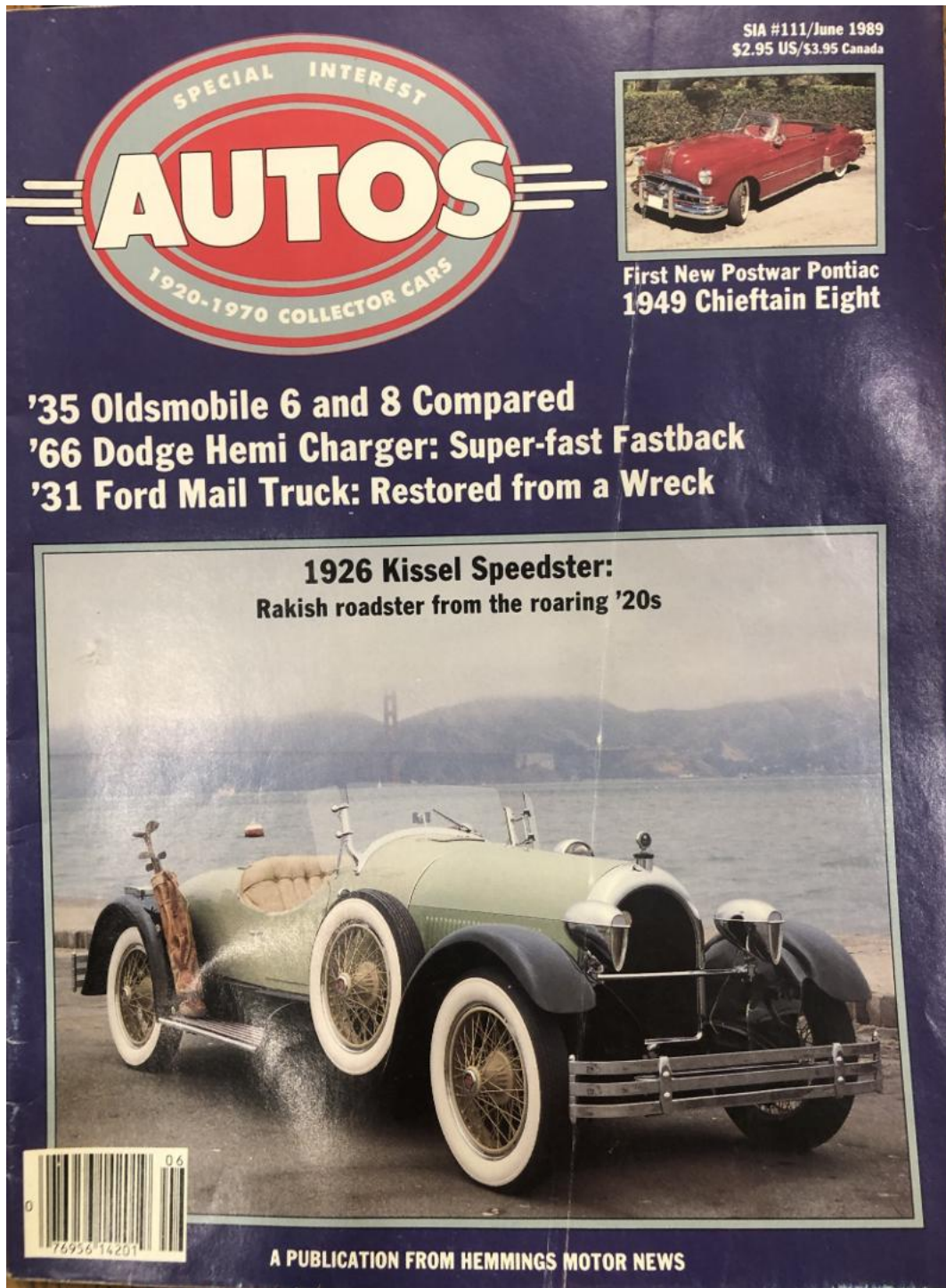
Three of your officers were able to attend the Hershey Swap Meet the week of Oct 6. Jim McPherson, Wayne Arnholt and I were all there. Thanks to Dan Perla, our former President, and Jim McPherson, I was allowed to display Postal A's merchandise at their tables. But first and most importantly, welcome to:

Keith Ernst

from Orwigsburg, Pa. as our newest member. Welcome aboard.

If you have never been to Hershey, you should consider going to the show. And I advise you plan on being there several days as the place is huge. If it is Model A related, you can probably find it. I must say, the unique parts to the Mail Trucks are difficult to find, but Jim (or was it Wayne) did find a set of rear door hooks. You never know.

Roger found this article that I thought interesting. I contacted Marc McCourt at Hemmings about printing it and he was very gracious in allowing us to reprint. **“Reproduced with permission from the June 1989 Issue 111 of *Special Interest Autos* magazine, a publication of Hemmings Motor News / Hemmings.com”**



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MAIL CALL!



1931 FORD AA MAIL TRUCK

by Alex Meredith
photos by Bud Juneau

I've always rather liked the old-time, wooden-bodied mail trucks. As a kid growing up in Berkeley, California, I was able, occasionally, to cadge a ride from the carrier who served our route. Strictly against Postal Service regulations, of course, but we lived on a very steep hill, and our mailman was a push-over for us kids — particularly when the weather was bad.

For a time, "our" mail truck was an Essex. No, not a Dover, Essex's short-lived commercial derivative. A 1929 Essex. Several of these vehicles were put into service in the East Bay area early in 1931. The Essex was a terrible choice for this purpose, not only because its high-winding engine didn't have enough low-end torque to lug such a heavy load up the hills, but also because the brakes were totally inadequate for that kind of duty. Evidently Hudson had unloaded its leftover '29 chassis on the unsuspecting government, a transaction which may have been expedited by company president Roy Chapin's political connections. (History enthusiasts will recall that in 1932 Chapin became President Hoover's Secretary of Commerce.)

In any case, the fleet was replaced by Model A Fords, after one of the Essexes came careening down the steepest part

of Stonewall Road, totally out of control. Somersaulting over a retaining wall, it landed upside down in a fishpond, instantly killing its driver. It was a tragic accident, and a senseless one.

So then we had Fords. Half-ton jobs, same size as the Essexes. But every now and then we saw one of the big ones: one-tonners, used primarily for such chores as commercial deliveries and servicing the postal sub-stations. Huge, top-heavy machines they were, fitted to the Ford AA chassis. Seemed like a lot of truck to be hauled about by Ford's little 40-horsepower four-banger, but that Model A engine got the job done.

It had been years since I had seen one of these big trucks, which isn't surprising. Only 2,900 of them were built between 1928 and 1931, we're told, and these are not the sort of machines that one ordinarily finds in the hands of collectors. In fact, as best we can determine, only two fully restored examples exist, anywhere.

Fortunately, one of them turned up at the Fresno Vintage Concours, proudly displayed by its owner, Ken Wall, of Reedley, California.

A story goes with it.

Years ago, back in Enid, Oklahoma, a kid named Henry Martens had the same fascination for mail trucks that I did, living two thousand miles away. Especially, in his case, the big one-tonners. And when one of them turned up for sale 30 years ago, Henry bought it, assigning it to utility duty on his farm.

The truck was pretty tired by that time. Reportedly, it had been used by the postal service from 1931 to 1952, then sold to a rural mail carrier — a private contractor — who made his rounds with it for another six years. One can only speculate concerning the number of times the odometer must have turned over, in all that time.

Finally, after a few years, the old Ford died. Martens left it behind the barn at his Fairview, Oklahoma, farm. And there it sat, rusting and rotting away.

It happens that Ken Wall, a carpentry instructor at Fresno City College, is married to a cousin of Henry Martens. He first saw the mail truck, or the remains of it, when he and his family were in Oklahoma for a Christmas gathering

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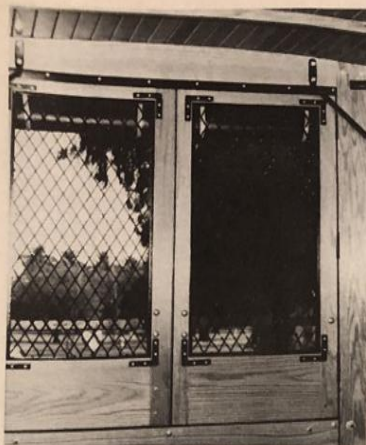


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Above left: There are "dogcatcher" style screens instead of windows at the back.
Above right: Tools and spare parts hide under driver's seat.
Below left: Simple lock keeps the mail safe while in transit.
Below right: Side curtains protect cargo from inclement weather.



1931 Ford AA

continued

in the mid-1970s. Aware that the machine was a rare one, Ken asked Cousin Henry what plans he had for it. It was to be completely restored, Martens declared.

But it wasn't. Not, that is, until Henry Martens finally trucked it west and unloaded it in front of Ken Wall's home, telling Ken he could do with it whatever he pleased.

Now, here was a dilemma. Wall had had no intention of becoming involved in a restoration project, yet he was hesitant to turn so rare a truck over to the scrap merchants. So with some reluctance he undertook the job. And what a job it was. The body was so badly

Chassis Specifications: 1931 Ford AA One-Ton

Engine	Four-cylinder, cast en bloc
Bore x stroke	3 ⁷ / ₈ " x 4 ¹ / ₄ "
Displacement	200.5 cubic inches
Brake horsepower	40 @ 2,200 rpm
Compression ratio	4.22:1
Valve configuration	L-head
Main bearings	3
Cooling system	Centrifugal pump; 16" 4-blade fan (optional; 2-blade standard)
	Coolant capacity 3 gallons
Transmission	4-speed
Rear axle	¾ floating
Gears	Spiral bevel
Ratio	5.14:1
Drive	Torque tube
Front spring	Transverse leaf type
Rear springs	Full cantilever
Brakes	4-wheel mechanical, internal-expanding
Effective area	474 ¹ / ₂ square inches
Wheels	Steel disc
Tires	6.00 x 20, 6-ply, front; 32 x 6 8-ply high-pressure, rear
Wheelbase	131 ¹ / ₂ "
Overall length	183 ¹ / ₂ "
Turning circle	46 feet
Frame	Tapered channel iron, 6" x 2 ¹ / ₄ ", made of 7/32" stock; five cross-members

rotted away that all Ken could do was to take it apart and use the pieces as patterns. Splines, transmission gears, rear end — all the mechanical components — were simply worn out. And much metal work was required.

Tackling the chassis first, Wall purchased two Model AA farm trucks. Between them he found enough good parts to bring the mail truck back to first-class mechanical condition. One of the engine blocks was sent to a Fresno machine shop for reboring; otherwise Ken did all the work himself. All of his spare time, one winter, was devoted to the project.

The following winter Ken undertook to restore the sheet metal, refinishing everything to original specifications. And the third winter found him building a brand new body, using prime red oak throughout. (The original body hadn't been quite that good, to tell the truth. As constructed in 1931 the mail truck used willow top slats and poplar

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panels, along with white oak for the structural parts.)

Technically, the truck should be finished both inside and out in the postal service's traditional olive drab. But Ken used 1,500 board feet of this beautiful (and expensive) red oak in the construction of the body, milling two-inch stock to the required one-and-an-eighth-inch thickness. The result, to a lover of fine wood, was so attractive that Ken simply couldn't bear to cover it up; so a natural finish was applied to the interior.

To complete the effect, Ken managed to acquire two old-time, railroad-type padlocks with which to secure the truck's cargo area. And then, through the newsletter of the Postal A's, a unit of the Model A Ford Club of America, he

located a 1930s-style postal uniform, which he wears when the mail truck appears at car shows and club meets.

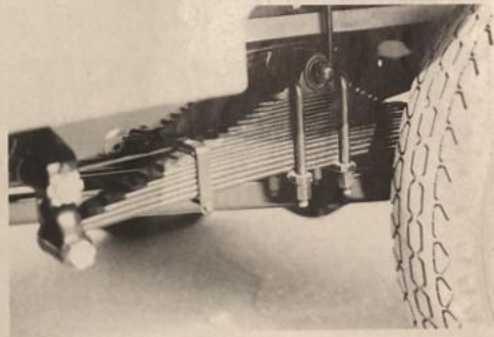
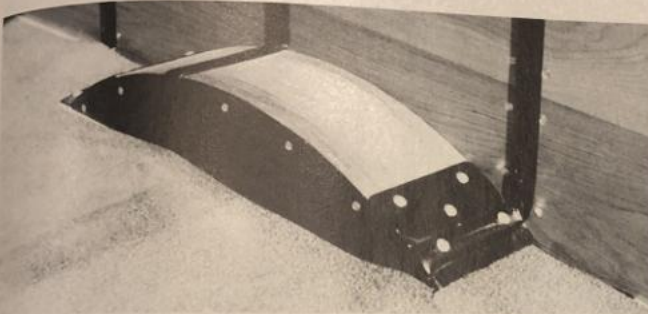
It goes without saying that Ken Wall's mail truck is the center of attention wherever it goes. And such is the nature of Ken's craftsmanship that in the 20 events where it has been shown, the truck has garnered 19 first-place awards and one second place. Not surprisingly, Wall himself has been a consistent "fashion" award winner, thanks to his vintage uniform! □

Acknowledgements

Our thanks to Ray Borges, William F. Harrah Automobile Foundation, Reno, Nevada. Special thanks to Ken Wall, Reedley, California.



Above: Mechanically, the mail truck is stock AA Ford. Left: Even the fender housings are wood. Below left: Husky 20-inch wheels look almost like modern mags in style. Below: Heavy cantilever springs help support things at the rear. Bottom left: Not the handiest arrangement for giving direction signals! Bottom: Long it isn't; low it isn't.



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Ronald Hammer
220 Metz Lane
Petaluma Ca. 94952

11/12/2025

Postal A's President
Charles Hilton
539 Whaley Pond Rd.
Graniteville, SC 29829

Dear President Charles:

Thank you for your help last summer with the lettering and colors for the mail truck that I purchased 10/19/2022. I acquired the 1931 Model A Mail truck from the estate Neil Bert Elias VIN number A4848742.

The Mail Truck was partially restored several years earlier and conversations with and information from the Executor of the estate and the selling agent. Because of the surface weathering of the engine and metal parts I estimated the restoration occurred from 2010-2015.

I obtained a bill of sale and Insurance Identification Card dated 03/27/2011 with the VIN number A4848742 on the insurance card.

I learned a lot in the process of restoring it to its current state. Les Andrews Model A Ford Mechanics Handbook which helped very much to the restoration work. I joined our local Model A Club the, Sonoma A's and received much advice and help in the restoration. I had my credit card on file with several Model A Parts Suppliers. Bert's, CW Moss, and Snyder's. Many of my questions were answered by the sales and owners of the supply houses. I was able to identify the person taking my order and we knew each other on a first name basis.

I will close and begin the Article you requested for the Special Delivery. I will send the article tomorrow and pictures of the truck pick up and progress pictures the article will cover the purchase transport and first assembly. I will provide a second report of the engine repair and what we learned. I need to figure out how to get the pictures out of my phone.

You're Friend:

Ronald Hammer

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My 1931 Model A Mail Truck Journey

Ronald Hammer

I have always been interested in cars and airplanes. An early fond memory I have is riding with my dad and his mother my grandma in the family car, a 1948 two door Chevrolet. As my dad drove us thru the neighborhood, I was busy telling her what year and make of car we saw as we passed and met them on the road.

The year was 1955 or 1956; my Grandmother asked my dad if I was correct about the year and model of the cars I identified. Dad said yes he is right about the year and makes of the cars. Having my dad confirm to Grandma that I was correct made me feel good and gave me confidence of my knowledge. I was a shy kid and needed that affirmation from adults who I admired. I felt noticed and appreciated because of that attention.

I am not sure where my interest in cars developed or how I could identify them. It seemed easy to me because cars in those years were all different and distinctive not like cars today. I had some knowledge of cars pre-1940 cars however I did not know much about Model T's, or Model A's. I had only heard of them from my uncle or dad in conversation.

When I was old enough to get a driver's license my dad found a 1952 Chevy 2 door hard top Belair for fifty dollars. It had been sitting in the back yard of one of the houses on his mail route. It was parked because the transmission was not working. It needed new second gear and clutch. My dad and his brother Lorne went to a junk yard and purchased parts for about twenty dollars and did the repair on the transmission for me. Their knowledge helped keep me in transportation. It was great I had my first car!!

Because my first car was a Chevy I liked General Motors vehicles. I owned several makes and models over the years however; I believe the two best cars I owned were fords. A 1956 Ford Club Sedan two door and a 2001 4 door Crown Victoria. Therefore I have come to appreciate and respect Ford Motors for all it has supplied the world.

Before I was a car guy I was a mailman's son. He and I share the same name. I was born October 1, 1948.

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My Dad was hired by the Post Office at Minot North Dakota in 1948. He worked at the Central Post office downtown. His first position at the Post Office, was delivering the mail to homes and business in our neighborhood in N.E. Minot. His route was a walking route. He knew the City like the back of his hand because each carrier was required to substitute for other carrier's in the city when needed. None of the carriers used vehicles to get to their route they all walked

The post office was and is a good job In North Dakota because you worked every day no matter the weather.

Prior to obtaining his job at the Post Office he served in World War II. His military service started in 1943. Following basic training he was enrolled in Engineering School in Pasadena, Ca. The purpose of the training was to have personnel for the rebuilding that would be need after the war. The war was moving so quickly after D day he was transferred from the school to a mortar unit in Texas. His unit went to France and he fought in the battle of the Bulge, he was awarded a Bronze star and purple heart.

My dad loved the Post Office and serving the public he appreciated working for the Government and instilled in his children a love of country and paying your taxes. Because that is what keeps the Government services viable and paid his salary.

PART 2; the Mail Truck Purchase

I retired October 1, 2021 as a Chiropractor after 47 years in practice. My daughter took over the practice and I began working for her part time until May 2024. In retirement I wanted to spend time with car activities and I found a 1931 Model A Murry body slant windshield fordor model 160B. It was restored and for sale in Minnesota. I decided to go ahead and buy the 1931 Murry body. I liked the slant windshield on the 1931 fordor which was some of the reason for the buy. Obviously I did not know much about the Model A's hobby. I had it delivered from Minnesota to northern California and began learning about Model A's.

I joined our local Model A club the Sonoma A's in northern California, there I met helpful members who knew the Model A and shared their knowledge. After attending Club meetings and learning more about Model A's I began looking at U-tube videos about Model A's and found Paul Shinn's channel.

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I saw the video about the Mail truck and his mentor purchasing a mail truck. Following that video I became interested in Mail Trucks because of my connection to the Post office because my dad was a Mailman.

In August 2022 I saw an ad on Craig's list for a 1931 Model A Mail Truck in Los Angeles. It was an estate sale and partially restored. The pictures of the Truck in the ad indicated the truck was partially disassembled with the radiator shell off and front fenders missing in the pictures. Because I had never seen a Mail truck advertised somewhat locally I decided to call and inquire. The truck was offered for sale at 19,500.00.

From the selling agent I learned that the truck was purchased by the owner around 2010 and a restoration of the wood body was done by a restoration shop in Oregon. The engine was overhauled and frame restored however the work was completed several years before 2022 and the work was not documented. The truck was offered as is with a bill of sale because the paperwork was lost.

I live in northern California and the project was located in Los Angeles about 350 miles away. I made arrangements with the Executors agent to look at the Mail truck in Lancaster, CA. I was attending a meeting in Malibu in September 2022 and I made arrangements to see the truck.

Lancaster is a desert town about 100 miles north and east of Los Angeles. I arrived in Malibu at three pm on a Friday. I left for Lancaster it was 3 hour trip one way in commute traffic. The location of the Mail Truck was 6 miles up a dirt road 20 miles east of Lancaster.

The Mail truck was under a small carport adjacent to a freestanding one stall garage. The wood body was restored however automotive paint was used on the wood. The automotive paint was cracked where the wood had shrunk at the seams in the wood body. The overall restoration appeared mostly correct with the first look.

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The project after the initial work sat for several years. The paint on the fenders, running boards, grill shell and metal parts was black. The Radiator shell was off, it appeared the engine was rebuilt however parts were missing and rusted. There was no documentation or history of who did the overhaul or coach work. The metal hardware appeared to be correct to the mail truck and showed appropriate patina and age.

I Liked the truck and saw the potential and the paper work issues were mostly overlooked and to be dealt with latter. I made an offer to purchase the truck, after some e-mails back and forth a price was agreed upon.

The Mail Truck Pick Trip:

I have a friend Bryan who is a retired aviation mechanic. I discussed the purchase of the Mail Truck with Bryan and he agreed to help me move the Mail Truck from Lancaster to Petaluma Ca. We used his Ford F250 and trailer. We left Petaluma at 3 am and arrived at 1pm in Lancaster; we loaded the Mail Truck onto the trailer and began the return trip to Petaluma. We completed the trip after a very long day.

At a gas station on highway 5 about half way home a Model A club member from San Jose was also gassing up. He saw the mail truck on the trailer and we began a conversation. He liked the Mail Truck and asked about it. He recommended I install a pinto engine in the Truck. I told Bryan about the conversation and the Pinto engine idea and he thought that would be sacrilegious for any Model A.

The following day we unloaded the truck at my home and put it toward the front of the carport and made plans to begin the restoration.

The Mail Truck Restoration:

In Retrospect the Mail truck was basally an unfinished project had good bones but need to be refreshed. Overall the previous owner did a good job having the body restored and engine work done however after it was partially restored it sat for several years with inadequate protection from the elements. It needed assembly refreshing and restoration. I do not think he used the Aldie Johnson book from the Postal A's to guide him in the restoration.

Because Bryan had retired from the Airlines, I was able to secure his expertise to help me with the project. With his help we have been able to bring it back to its current restored state.

I was still working at the time and we worked on the project on days off and occasionally Saturdays beginning December 2022. Our work space was a large carport at the rear of my house it was not set up to do restoration work. Lighting was not great and the weather in the winter at night may go to 30 degrees. We used space heaters and dressed in layers which helped relive the dampness only slightly.

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Initially I was hoping to put gas in the tank and oil in the engine and start it up. Unfortunately that is not what happened. The Carburetor was rusted out, I sourced a different carburetor and it need to be rebuilt. I begin sourcing parts that were missing or beyond use. Bryan suggested that we drop the sump and check the crank and journals my response was what is a sump? He explained it is an oil pan, and then I knew exactly what he said. We had several conversations which were similar; he educated me on proper preparation work and mechanics.

We did not drop the oil pan. I used a borescope to look at the pistons and cylinder walls. It appeared engine was rebuilt with pistons and walls clean the pistons were standard no carbon. The accessories looked good but with patina. The carburetor and distributor were rusted.

I began to source Parts. I began ordering parts and supplies from Bert's, CW Moss and Snyder's. I Purchased Les Andrews Mechanics hand book.

We sourced remanufactured parts from most of the Model A supply houses for many different parts, horn, horn ring, lights, and steering wheel and interior dash components. The parts sales personnel were very helpful and I order enough parts and asked question that I became familiar with the salesman who had the best answers to my questions.

My hope was to put gas in the tank and oil in the engine and go. It needed the carburetor rebuilt and new distributor. Bryan used a kit and rebuilt the carburetor that was sourced from Craig's list. The distributor parts were ordered and installed.

We proceeded to add the gas and oil put water in the radiator and installed a battery. After a few turns of the starter and sorting some switch issues the engine came to life and it sounded good. The first thing we heard was a muffled exhaust sounds. Soon something was coming out the rear tail pipe. We heard something hitting the floor at the rear of the truck. It was acorns coming out the exhaust!!

I did not know that a ford muffler could hold so many acorns. I cleaned them up the first time the engine was run and I collected about a gallon container full of acorns. Each time we ran the engine a few more acorns came out eventually they stopped. Apparently it was in storage long enough for squirrels to pack away their lunch in the Mail Truck muffler. There seemed to be no harm done to the engine from the partial blockages. The engine was running and sounding good after the acorns stopped coming out the exhaust.

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We thought the engine was good after it started and ran. Therefore we proceeded to the assembly process of the various parts. We needed to fit the fenders, hood, grill radiator, running boards and apron. The top was not covered and the two and 1/2 inch wood slats needed to be sanded and filled due to moisture damage. The original top material used on the mail truck was white sail cloth canvas with water proofing with several coats of water proof topping. Because of the nature of the restoration and my purpose for the Truck I chose to have the top installed using modern vinyl materials by an upholstery shop.

Bryan found a crack in the front cross member between the frame rails. A new one was sourced and installed.

The Mail Truck came with rear fenders which were difficult to attach to the body. The prior assemblers of the truck fenders had stressed the fenders and they were bent and did not fit to the body fender well. The proper fender for the 1931 Mail Truck is a rear fender from a 1931 wide bed pick-up. Therefore I need to source a pair of wide bed pick up fenders, I was able to find a pair of fenders and Bryan prepped and painted them. The detail work is what takes all the time fitting and refitting.

In the summer of 2023 we continued to work and completed the assembly of the front and rear fenders and radiator shell and radiator and cross member. I had driven truck around the neighborhood and everything seemed ok oil looked a little milky but not bad, unfortunately water had disappeared from the radiator. Six Months had passed and we needed to change the oil and get it ready to deliver the mail.

When the oil, was drained water came out from the drain plug. We had just completed the assembly and fitting of all the front end parts with welting and beading. The beading that was used around the gas tank was the wrong size and it need to be removed and new proper beading installed. There was no lettering on the Mail truck

With the findings of water in the oil pan we needed to determine the source of the water. There was nothing to do but to remove the engine and find the problem. Little did we know that was just the beginning and that there would be more than just the water issues with the engine.

The next installment of the Mail Truck restoration article will review what need to be repaired in the engine and the engine removal disassembly and machine work required to save the engine block and prior overhaul.

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Pictures of Ron's Work



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